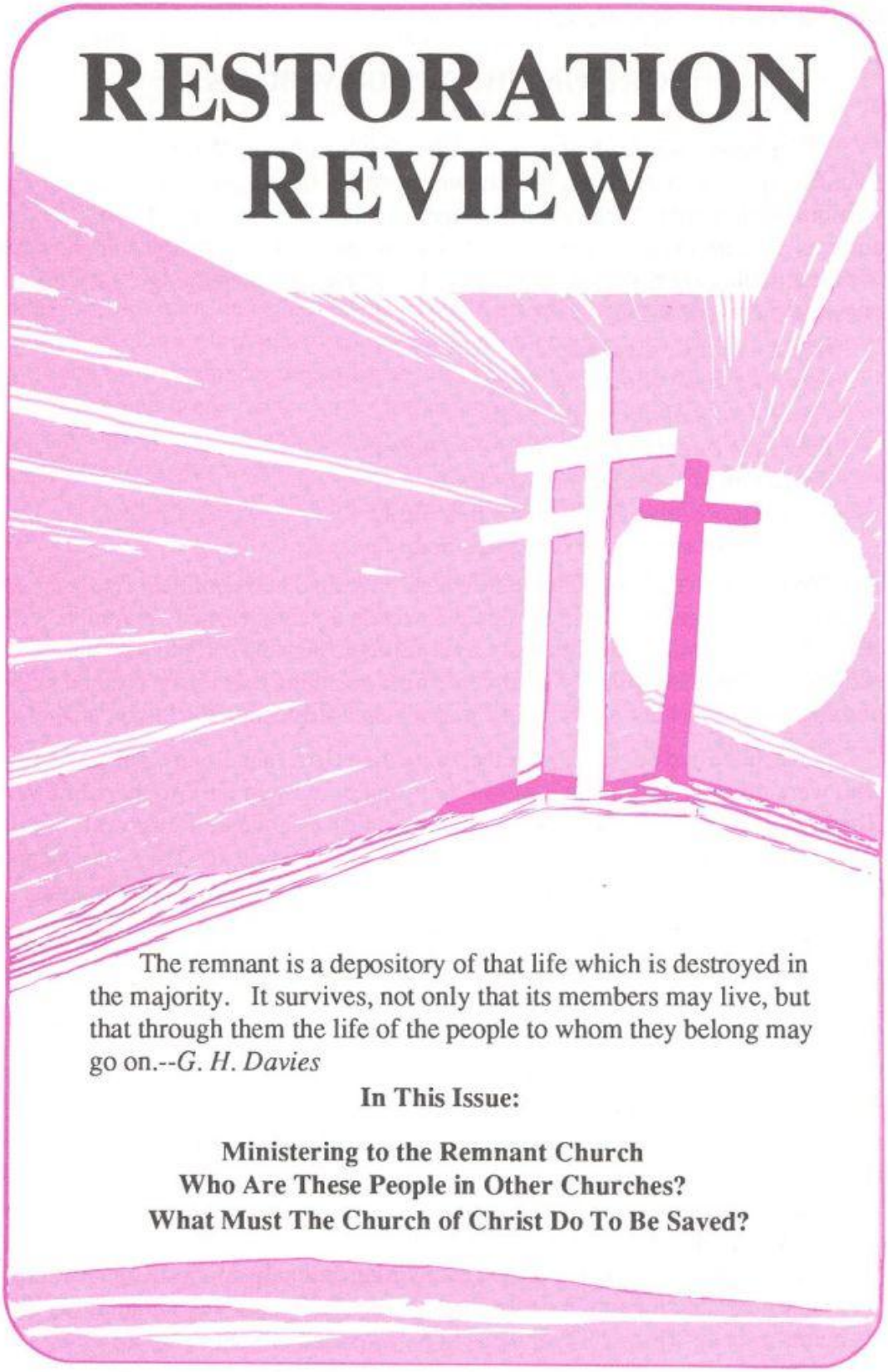
RESTORATION REVIEW



The remnant is a depository of that life which is destroyed in the majority. It survives, not only that its members may live, but that through them the life of the people to whom they belong may go on.--*G. H. Davies*

In This Issue:

Ministering to the Remnant Church
Who Are These People in Other Churches?
What Must The Church of Christ Do To Be Saved?

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What the Old Testament Means to Us. . . No.4

MORE ON THE WISDOM BOOKS

All cultures, ancient and modem alike, have had their Wisdom movements. Even though we in America are known more for our pragmatism than for our wisdom, we have nonetheless had our sages and their wise sayings. As with ancient cultures our canons of wisdom are mostly anonymous. They emerge somehow out of the hard school of experience. We don't know who said these things, but we don't question the wisdom they teach:

A stitch in time saves nine.

A rolling stone gathers no moss.

There's no fool like an old fool.

Every tub ought to stand on its own bottom.

An idle mind is the Devil's workshop.

A bird in the hand is worth two in a bush.

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

We have had our sages, some of whom have also been political figures, such as Benjamin Franklin, whose "A penny saved is a penny earned" is remembered beyond all of his political statements, as is "Early to bed and early to rise makes one healthy, wealthy, and wise." We all remember one thing that Harry Truman said if nothing else, "The buck stops here!," and we cannot question the lesson it teaches.

So we have had our sages, whether comedians like Jack Benny and Bob Hope, who were often as wise as they were funny, and homespun philosophers like Will Rogers and Eric Hoffer, who would come as near as anyone to personifying the "Wisdom" of the ancients in a modem American context. They represent a "Common Sense" mentality that has always characterized American thought.

There is one important difference in that the ancients grappled with the problem of evil and human suffering more than we have. That may be because we are not yet an old culture and have not had the experience of the ancients. But we have moved in that direction with such aphorisms as "Let sleeping dogs lie," "Every cloud has a silver lining," and "Its an ill wind that blows no good."

Just as our Wisdom is more humanistic than religious, so it was with the ancients. Hardly any of it was spiritual, but the kind of practical knowledge that atheists could accept as well as believers. While ancient Israel borrowed from the Wisdom of the

Egyptians and Babylonians, they spiritualized a lot of it. It remains true, however, that there are hundreds of Proverbs, the Bible's most obvious Wisdom book, that say nothing of God or anything uniquely religious. For example, "A merry heart doeth good like medicine" (Pro. 17:22) and "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Pro. 23:7) appeals to believer and unbeliever alike.

But still Israel canonized ancient Wisdom in one particular way: Wisdom was the gift of God and came down from heaven. The beginning of wisdom was the fear of the Lord. They went even further, insisting that Wisdom had its retribution. If one were righteous (wise), he would be rewarded in this world with good things and long life; if he were wicked (foolish), he would be punished in this world with sickness and tragedy. We saw in our study of Job that this was a predominate theme in that Wisdom book.

It should be noted that while the Wisdom movement was prominent in Israel and of long duration, and at last occupying more than its share of the Old Testament canon, it was not particularly appreciated in other parts of the Old Testament, especially by the prophets. Jeremiah seems to have little use for them when he says, "The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken. Behold, they have rejected the word of the Lord; so what wisdom do they have?" (Jer. 8:9). Those who persecuted Jeremiah were willing to do away with him, for they would still have "counsel from the wise," which they could abide more than a firey prophet (Jer. 18:18).

Proverbs is the flagship book for the Wisdom literature of the Bible, even more than Job, not only because many of them were believed to be authored by Solomon, Israel's most famous sage, but also because of their simplicity and practicality. There are no theological mysteries. We may have a problem in heeding the wisdom of Proverbs, but we have no problem in understanding it. Even though Proverbs is not theologically weighty it gives us what is probably the best definition of religion in all the Bible, which is my choice for its greatest passage:

Trust in the Lord with all your heart,
And lean not on your own understanding;
In all your ways acknowledge Him,

And he shall direct your paths. (Pro. 3:5-6)

Other gems from this book reveal how a lot of its sayings have become part of our common speech. It is like the man reading Shakespeare for the first time who was surprised with how many quotations there were!

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. (1:7)

If sinners entice you, do not consent. (1:10)

The memory of the righteous is blessed. (10:7)

He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty. (16:32)

A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches. (22:1)

Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it. (22:16)

Let another man praise you, and not your own mouth. (27:2)

Faithful are the wounds of a friend. (27:6)

The wicked flee when no one pursues. (28:1)

Where there is no vision, the people perish. (29:18)

While such emphasis on worldly wisdom in this book may be disconcerting to the Christian, it may be observed that one proverb in seven is religious in theme, and they are more practical than speculative. It should not be surprising that there is little of God's grace in this book, which is typical of Wisdom literature. But God always rewards such virtues as truth, humility, charity, and purity of heart, and always punishes the contrary vices.

When one gets into Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon, two other Wisdom books, he may find himself asking as Jeremiah did, What kind of wisdom is this? It is understandable that these books became a part of the Bible only after extended controversy in the Jewish church. One has to be a real sleuth to find the word of God in either of them, even though there are some important truths stated, in Ecclesiastes at least. It is the message of these books that a Christian reader finds bewildering, if there is a message at all.

The theme of Ecclesiastes, which is blatantly pessimistic ("vanity" appears 25 times!) is emptiness. Life is nothing but emptiness—"Vanity of vanities" saith the preacher. Life is an ongoing series of unrelated and meaningless experiences. It is here that the book provides one of the most fascinating portions of all the Bible, the cadence of which is spellbinding. Part of it goes like this: *To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven:*

a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;

a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up;

a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance. . ..

a time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.

This “wise” man is saying what a Christian cannot believe, that life is an illusion, a succession of senseless events. The book begins and ends with a thesis that the believer must reject, “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.” This gripping passage about a time for this and a time for that is a good example of how one might distinguish between “what it meant” and “what it means.” One might take this passage to mean that God has ordained certain conflicting forces in our lives and we are to yield ourselves to His sovereign will, but that is not what this sage was saying. We have to be careful about using the Bible that way.

But in spite of its unacceptable fatalism Ecclesiastes passes along a few gems of Wisdom, and it is here that we might find the word of God:

> *He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity in their hearts.* (3:11)
>
> *God is in heaven, and you are on earth; therefore let your words be few.* (5:2)
>
> *God hath made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes.* (7:29)
>
> *Cast your bread upon the waters, for you will find it after many days.* (11:1)
>
> *Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, before the difficult days come, and the years draw near when you say, “I have no pleasure in them.”* (12:1)
>
> *Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.* (12:7)

The book ends with one of the Bible’s great passages, which stands over against its pessimism and fatalism: “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. “ The last verse’ of the book points to judgement: “For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether it is good or whether it is evil.”

Like Ecclesiastes, the Song of Solomon, the last of the canonical Wisdom books, would not have made it into the Bible except that the magic name of Solomon was connected with it. While the ancient Jewish church managed to interpret it as an allegory of God’s love for his people and the ancient Christian church as an allegory of Christ’s love for his church, it is difficult to view the book objectively and see it as anything more than an erotic love poem. Since it is so full of passion (“He shall lie all night between my breasts”) and doesn’t so much as even mention the name of God, one is amazed to find it in the Bible, except for tradition.

Unlike Ecclesiastes, the Song of Solomon has no great passages to give it some relevance. One beautiful line, “His banner over me is love,” has become a children’s song in the church and made to refer to God, but in this poem it was said by one whose “navel is

like a round goblet" and whose "two breasts are like two fawns" and was addressed to him who "kisses me with the kisses of his mouth." It is understandable that one would not likely turn to this book for spiritual strength, and it is also understandable that that playful seminary student in a moden play would name it as his favorite book in the Bible!

There are other Wisdom books, the Wisdom of Solomon and Ecclesiaticus (or the Wisdom of Sirach), that were rejected as canonical by the Jewish church, and subsequently by the early Christians, that are a part of the Apocrypha and included in Roman Catholic versions of the Bible. One would only need to read these, especially Sirach, to appreciate their educational and spiritual value. I often turn to Ecclesiasticus in my Jerusalem Bible, a Roman Catholic version, and through the years I have underscored choice passages. I pass along a few of them:

Marry a daughter off, and you have finished a great work; but give her to a man of sense. (7:25)

Do not gloat over a man's death; remember we all must die. (8:8)

A king today is a corpse tomorrow. (10:12)

No one is meaner than the man who is mean to himself. (14:6)

It is better to die childless than to have godless ones. (16:4)

Have you heard something? Let it die with you. Courage! It will not burst you! (19:10)

The crown of old men is ripe experience, their true glory, the fear of the Lord. (25:6)

Any wound rather than the wound of the heart! Any spite rather than the spite of a woman! (25:13)

Do not wolf your food or you will earn dislike. (31:19)

I could go on and on, for there are 51 chapters of such stuff. I delight in it, and I must say that Sirach was my kind of a guy, with a zest for life and a sense of humor. And he liked women, "if her tongue is kind and gentle." One can find lots of compliments in Sirach to pass along to his wife, such as "Like the sun rising over the mountain of the Lord is the beauty of a good wife in a well-kept house." And he is the one biblical writer that has a good word for doctors, "Honour the doctor with the honour that is his due in return for his services; for he too has been created by the Lord." He also had a love for history. There are several chapters honoring Israel's great, which begins with "Now let us praise illustrious men." Abraham was his favorite—"no one was ever his equal in glory."

So, wisdom is what the Wisdom books are all about, and that is what they mean to us. Wisdom comes from the Lord; it enriches life. There are hundreds, yea thousands, of practical suggestions on how to make the wisdom of the Lord the anchor of one's life.

But the Christian has something important to add to all this, which is what Paul calls "Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 1:24). We can't be truly wise by following Solomon and the sages of Israel, but only in following Christ as the wisdom of God. Besides, we can't keep the mandates of the Wisdom books any better than we can keep any other set of laws. Only by the grace of God and the power of Christ can we incorporate the wisdom of Solomon and Sirach into our lives.

It is noteworthy that Jesus did not buy the basic thesis of the sages of Israel, that good people will be rewarded in this life and evil people will be punished, and that if tragedy overtakes one it is because he has sinned. When in Lk. 13:1-5 Jesus is told how Pilate brutalized certain Galileans, mixing their blood with their sacrifices, he responded to this with, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things?" He goes on to show that those eighteen people on whom the tower in Siloam fell were no worse than those on whom the tower did not fall. So, he realized that bad things may happen to good people and good things may happen to bad people.

This is another example of how all Scripture, Old or New Testament alike, has to be judged in the light of Christ, for he is the arbiter of all the Bible. While the Wisdom books must have been important to Jesus, and we can believe he knew many proverbs by heart, it is evident that he was selective in accepting their conclusions.—*the Editor*

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MINISTERING TO THE REMNANT CHURCH

Every good minister needs constant encouragement, and by minister I refer to all those who endeavor to build God's kingdom in this world, to alleviate human suffering, and to educate both head and heart of human kind. Encouragement is vital since such tasks often appear hopeless. We are sometimes tempted to conclude that we have to go it alone or almost alone. It is common for people to write to this journal, and say, "I am pleased to learn that there are others who believe like I do." I always take delight in assuring them that they have far more on their side than they realize.

It is understandable that one who would like to effect change concludes that she is standing alone, for from the narrow confines of her own situation it appears that way. She may be the only one in her church that believes as she does, or so it seems. Such an existence can be both lonely and discouraging.

You may be assured that you are not alone, for wherever you are there is a remnant that has not bowed the knee to Baal. That story of Elijah supposing he was the only one left who had not bowed to Baal points up the thesis of this essay: Whatever your cause, if it be right and good and just, there is a remnant that will join you in the struggle. And you don't have to find them; they will find you!

It is a beautiful story of how Elijah discovered a wonderfully encouraging truth, that he had far more on his side that he could ever have imagined. It is one story that makes its way into both the Old and New Testaments. As Paul tells it in Rom. 11, drawing upon 1 Kings 19, Elijah assured God that all the faithful prophets had been killed except him. "I alone am left, and they seek my life," he complained.

I am alone! It is understandable that Elijah felt that way, and it is understandable when any of us feels that way, for the evidence appears to support such a conclusion. Elijah was no cry baby but a brave prophet. It was simply that he didn't know the great truth that I am talking about in this article. God always has his remnant! We had better believe it. It is the one great truth that will keep us going. The remnant is out there; we might not know where, but they are there. And we don't have to go searching for them. We only need to do what God has called us to do, faithfully and with perseverance, and the remnant will start showing up, one by one perhaps, but they will be there.

We can imagine how stunned Elijah was when God told him, "I have reserved for Myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal." Seven thousand! He thought he was all alone. He probably wondered where they all were. But he got the point. He was not to take refuge under a juniper tree or hide in a cave but to get to work doing what faithful prophets are supposed to do. The remnant would turn up in God's own way and in His own time.

Another great prophet was later to learn the truth about the remnant, and it made all the difference in his ministry. When God called Isaiah it was with such divine drama ("I saw the Lord sitting on a throne") that he cried out, "I am undone! I am a man of unclean lips, for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." When God asked, "Whom shall I send?," Isaiah responded with, "Here am I! Send me."

But it turned out to be a strange mission for Isaiah. He was to prophesy to people who had ears but they would not hear, they had eyes but they would not see, they had minds but they would not understand. Isaiah's problem was different from Elijah's in that he was sent on a mission that seemed meaningless. He was to preach to people that would ignore him. Why?, he asked, and for how long? God at last pointed to the faithful remnant who would be ready when he was, likening them to a giant oak fallen in the forest, whose stump

remains (Isa. 6:13). The prophet would not have the oak to work with, but only its stump, but that would be sufficient.

The remnant thus became a basic principle of Isaiah's ministry. In Isa. 1:13 he said, "Unless the Lord of hosts had left to us a very small remnant, we would have become like Sodom, we would have been made like Gomorrah." He even named his firstborn son Shearjashub, which meant "a remnant shall return."

But it is in Zeph. 3:13 that we have something of a characterization of the remnant: "The remnant of Israel shall do no unrighteousness and speak no lies, nor shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth; for they shall feed their flocks and lie down, and no one shall make them afraid." This is the theme that runs throughout Scripture: The remnant are the faithful ones who are not afraid; they are the ones God uses to carry out His purposes through all the ages.

This is not to say that the remnant are the only ones who will be redeemed, for God always has mercy on whom He will have mercy. The remnant are rather the ones that hang in, those that are willing to get their noses bloodied, those that are not afraid of what the power structures might do. They are the ones who knock, ask, and seek. They are the ones that will listen to the truth, that will change, that will forge new frontiers. They are the avant garde. And they are always out there. You can count on it. That is encouraging!

All through Scripture it is the remnant that keeps the faith alive. When the flood came and destroyed the world, Noah was spared. When the Pharaoh of Egypt murdered all the male children among the Hebrews, Moses was delivered. When the Hebrews that came out of Egyptian slavery all died in the wilderness because of their faithlessness, Caleb and Joshua were spared. And when at last God's people were taken as captives to faraway Babylon for seventy long years, a remnant returned.

It is also the case in the New Testament. When Paul drew upon the story of Elijah for the concept of the remnant, he said, "Even so then, at the present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace" (Rom. 11:5). One might speak of "the remnant church," as Rev. 3:1-6 would suggest. The church at Sardis was dead even when it had the reputation of being alive. But it had its remnant: "You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy."

Jesus thus believed in the remnant church, for even in a "dead" church (his own description) he had "a few" that walked with him in white. And I believe in the remnant church. I have visited many churches of all denominations that appear to be much like

Sardis, but it always encourages me to be able to say, “Even here there are a few. . .” The remnant church is in every church!

We don’t have to hunt them down, or buttonhole them, or bang on their front door. We only need to allow the light of the glorious Christ to shine in our own lives. Like insects in the night, those who are searching will find their way to the light. Our task as ministers to the remnant church is not to reform others but ourselves. An old Chinese Christian had the right idea when he prayed, “Renew your church, O Lord, beginning with me.” We can’t change people anyway. God has to do it, and He can do it through us only when we ourselves are changed. It has been a great liberating truth for me to learn that I must stay busy working on myself, not others. That happens to be the only way we can really help others.

Our job is not to reach the masses, contrary to all the presumptions of hi-tech TV evangelism. The masses will not listen. They never have and never will. Those who are successful with the masses have to compromise the message. What is happening is that the masses are using them, conforming them to their own image and calling it religion—a religion of their own making, full of ease and comfort. When it comes to the truth they most need to hear, the masses have ears but they will not hear, they have eyes but will not see. Not only in Isaiah’s time but in our day as well. Only the remnant will listen.

We see it in the ministry of Jesus who came to gather God’s remnant church. He came unto his own (the masses of the Jews), but his own received him not, but to those who did receive him (the remnant), he gave them the power to become children of God (Jn. 1:11-12). He did not have to seek out the remnant, for they found him once he was on the scene. His was a quiet ministry. He did not “raise His voice, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street” (Isa. 42:2). He did not go hi-tech; he sent no advance team with Madison Ave. advertising techniques.

Rather than appoint a professional staff as his assistants, Jesus gathered a rag-tag gang from the rank and file. He placed no ads in the Galilean Gazette. In fact, he tried to keep secret a lot of what he did. The remnant found him anyway, and he knew they would. In the light of all this Malcolm Muggeridge, the British journalist who came to Jesus from atheism, insisted that Jesus would not have used TV even if it were available. I agree, but this is not to say the church should not be on TV.

Those who minister to the remnant may not have great crowds, nor are they likely to be popular or purse-wise. But their work will be interesting, exciting, and rewarding. The future is theirs, for they are on the winning side. They are always optimists who believe all things, hope all things, and endure all things. They are confident without being arrogant.

This journal is a modest example of ministering to the remnant, the remnant church among Churches of Christ/Christian Churches. We do no advertising; we have no gimmicks; we never ask for money; we have no institutional support. The power structures have always opposed us, but it doesn't matter. We have a message to the remnant, those who long to be free in Christ, and they always find us. I don't know how they find us, but for 39 years they have been finding us, seven thousand and then some who have not bowed the knee to the Baals of obscurantism, sectarianism, and prideful legalism. Letters from new readers often say, "I just now found out about you. Where have you been all my life?" We must remember that in ministering to the remnant the Holy Spirit makes the arrangement only when both sides are ready!

The remnant always returns. Shearjashub is our name!—*the Editor*

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JESUS PRAYED IT ALL

If any prayer of Jesus in the New Testament should be called "The Lord's Prayer," it is the one recorded in John 17. The one that is usually so designated, the one Jesus taught his disciples to pray and that begins with "Our Father, who art in heaven," cannot in one important respect be rightly called the Lord's prayer. He himself could not and would not have prayed that prayer! Since he was "the holy one of God" and was without sin, he could not have prayed "Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us." But since it was Jesus who crafted the prayer and taught it to his disciples, it may be called the Lord's prayer in that sense, as it is and always shall be. I would not want to change that. I am only saying that Jesus' prayer in Jn. 17 may more significantly be viewed as Jesus' own prayer, which is sometimes referred to as his high priestly prayer. It is by far his longest prayer recorded in the Scriptures.

The prayer in Jn. 17 is especially significant because of what it says about unity. It is more than a prayer for unity, for it is a revelation of the nature, means, and purpose (or end) of unity. It should impress us as enormously significant that Jesus would pray about unity the way he does as he makes his way toward Gethsemane and the Cross.

What is amazing is that our Lord not only prayed for the oneness of his own apostles but also for all who would become believers through their testimony, that they too would be one. While Jesus may not have in that moment been conscious of unborn generations for centuries to come, he was also praying for us all in the twentieth century who believe in him as Lord, that we too will be one. That is not all. There is interlaced in that prayer a

profound philosophy of unity. Once we are informed about the nature of unity, the means of realizing it, and what unity is intended to accomplish, there is little need for further information. That is why we are saying that in this appeal to the Father Jesus prayed it all or said it all—all we need to know about unity.

What is unity or what is its nature? It is oneness with Christ who is one with the Father, and consequently oneness with all others who are in Christ. Our Lord said as much in that prayer: "Holy Father, keep through your name those whom You have given Me, that they maybe one as We are one" (verse 11). He goes on in verse 20 to use that penetrating phrase "as you, Father, are in Me, and I in you, may they be one in Us" to pinpoint the nature of unity.

Christ is in God; God is in Christ; we as believers are in Christ and in God. That is what unity is, and it is the only kind of unity there ever can be. It is both that simple and that profound. A black preacher sought to catch the beauty of this imagery by an apt illustration. Removing an iron poker that had long been in the fire, he held it up, the tip of which was red hot, and cried out, 'The fire is in the poker and the poker is in the fire. That's unity!"

But there is really no way to understand the mystery of our oneness in Christ. Paul so described it in Eph. 5. After saying, "We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones," he goes on to say, "This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and his church." We accept the mystery by faith, and we can exult in it as the apostle does in Col. 1:27, again referring to it as a mystery, "Christ in you, the hope of glory."

This is the only test we should ever make in Christian fellowship: that we all be one in Christ. And we must be non-judgmental as to precisely when and how one becomes one in Christ. In the light of Scripture we can say that this *usually* occurs when one believes in Christ, repents of his sins, is baptized, and receives the Holy Spirit, and in that order, but we cannot be dogmatic about the order since even in Scripture there are variations. But we can be absolutely certain that being one in Christ is related to faith in Christ as Lord and obedience to him in all things according to our understanding.

And this is the nature of Christian unity. All who are in Christ are united to him and to each other. It is a personal relationship that we have with him as our Lord and Savior, and because of that relationship we are united with all others who have that same relationship. This allows for great diversity, whether national, racial, sexual, cultural, ideological, and even doctrinal. People can be wrong about some things and still be one in Christ together. They can disagree, even substantially, and still accept each other in love because of their common bond to Jesus Christ. This is why the prayer of our Lord for the unity of all

believers is an answerable prayer. If unity means that we have to see everything alike then Jesus prayed an impossible prayer. Jesus did not pray for unity by conformity.

The second major facet of this prayer is that Jesus identifies the means to unity: “The glory which you gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one” (verse 22). As important as Christian doctrine is, Jesus did not point to a body of doctrine as the means to oneness. It wasn’t any of the ordinances or church membership, however important these may be. The means to unity is the glorious presence of God in our lives. “God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself,” the apostle says in 2 Cor. 5:19, and this is what made God and Christ one. We can think of this in terms of the Holy Spirit. When the Spirit came upon Christ at his baptism, God became present in a special way. The glory (presence) of God filled the heart and mind of Jesus, and this is what made them one.

This is why the Bible refers to “the fellowship of the Spirit” (Philip. 2:1). The word *koinonia*, the Greek word Paul used for fellowship, means sharing a common life. When the Spirit is in you and the Spirit is in me, we share the life of the Spirit. It is thus the mutual indwelling of the Holy Spirit that makes us one. This is the means to unity. That is why Paul goes on in Philip. 1 to speak of “being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind” (verse 2). To be like-minded is to be Christlike in common. All this is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. If the Spirit is with us and in us, we cannot help but be united, for it is the Spirit’s fruit.

Unity is thus a gift to be received, not a condition to be attained. It is the work of God, not our work. The means to unity is the presence of God in our lives, realized in the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

The third dimension of this amazing prayer from the lips of our Lord is that it names the purpose of unity or the end to be realized. Jesus prayed it this way: “May they be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they maybe one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me” (verse 21).

That the world may believe! It is a remarkable petition. Is Jesus saying to God that he realizes that a divided and quarreling people cannot win a lost world? Is he saying that the church must be ONE for the world to be WON? If so, there is a necessary relationship between unity and evangelism. Jesus may be saying that unity of believers is a kind of evangelism in itself, for the witness of a united, loving community of believers will have such power as to bring the lost to Christ.

In verse 23 of this prayer Jesus joins unity and love: “that they might be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.” Love and unity are inseparable. Without love there can be no oneness, without oneness there can be no love.

How will the world know without any question who are truly Jesus’ disciples? He had already answered that in John 13:34-35: “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

It isn’t how right we are or how big we are or even how good we are. It isn’t programs, projects, or professions. It isn’t even gimmicks. The only real power we have is in being bound together in that love with which Jesus has loved us, a love that unites us to him and to each other. When lost humanity sees that it will say, “That is what I have been looking for.”

It is remarkable that all we really need to know about unity is in our Lord’s prayer for the oneness of all believers. The nature of unity (in Christ), the means whereby it is realized (the Holy Spirit), and its purpose (conversion of the world to Christ) are all in that prayer. What more do we need? What are we waiting for?—*the Editor*

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We Must Recover Our Heritage As A Unity People . . .

WHAT MUST THE CHURCH OF CHRIST DO TO BE SAVED? (4)

In the last installment I observed that if the Churches of Christ are to be saved as a viable witness to our divided and troubled world they must once and for all repudiate their divisive ways. Since separating ourselves from the Disciples of Christ back in the 1890’s, a division that was formally recognized in the Census of 1906, we have continued to divide and sub-divide at the rate of at least one new faction each decade.

These divisions sometimes strike home with cruel irony, for brothers in the same family who grew up in the same congregation and went away to the same college and both made preachers find themselves on different sides of “the issue” that is being made a test of fellowship. Family reunions are a problem since the brothers can no longer “fellowship” each other or even speak to each other. Families are thus torn asunder by our inexcusable factions. We have brought pain to ourselves and disgust to our neighbors. Because of our

deplorable partyism and all the legalisms that go with it we have for decades been going to church more and enjoying it less. Petty quarrels have taken joy from our religion.

In my last piece I urged that this be corrected by an open repudiation of our divisive ways. We must announce publicly that we have sinned against our Lord's prayer for the unity of his people; that we have been a disgrace to the community of believers by having a half dozen "faithful" Churches of Christ in a single town, none of whom have any fellowship with the others; and that we have tragically failed to show the one sure sign of being Christ's followers, by loving each other even as he has loved us. I say this should be done publicly so as to make our repudiation of our sectarianism and our resolution to follow the ways of peace as broad as our divisions, which have been strewn across the entire spectrum of our presence as a church.

In this installment I want to add that our salvation as a responsible people of God depends on our recovering our heritage as a unity movement among the church at large, a concept that we have well nigh lost sight of. We must rediscover our roots, the implications of which would be a rude awakening to many of our people who don't know who they are, where they came from, or where they are going. We are by and large a cut-flower people, alienated from our past and separated from our history. We are probably as ahistorical or history-less as any denomination that could be named. For our recent leadership to tell us that we are the true, restored church of the New Testament, and that the intervening 2,000 years of history doesn't matter, is a cruel rip-off.

We must first of all recapture the values of our heritage in the Stone-Campbell Movement in the simplest ways, such as reviving the mottoes and axioms of our pioneers, and coming to see what they meant by them. They were able to pack great truths in small capsules and thus fire the imagination of the people. The first lesson we need to learn about the old mottoes is that they had mostly to do with unity, such as "In matters of faith, unity; in matters of opinion, liberty; in all things, love." The mottoes help us to see that our forebears had a passion for unity and that the movement they launched was an effort to unite the Christians in all the sects.

To introduce you to other mottoes I will escort you on a visit to the Disciples of Christ Historical Society in Nashville, which was created two generations ago to serve Churches of Christ as well as Christian Churches and Disciples of Christ by keeping them in touch with their history. We have been negligent in drawing upon the rich resources of this depository of our heritage. We can correct this in part by the visit that we now begin.

We pause in the courtyard in front of this beautiful Gothic library to study the cenotaph that stands as a memorial to the four leading pioneers of our Movement: Thomas and Alexander Campbell, Barton Stone, and Walter Scott. A cenotaph is a memorial

honoring a person who is buried elsewhere, such as the Lincoln Memorial and the Washington Monument in the District of Columbia. The "tombs" honor these national heroes, but they are buried elsewhere. The cenotaph honoring our pioneers has their likenesses engraved in stone. Under each likeness there is cut in stone a motto or slogan that epitomizes what his ministry was about. We will study two of these.

Below the stem likeness of Thomas Campbell is the most quoted line in our history outside the Bible itself: "The Church of Christ upon earth is essentially, intentionally, and constitutionally one." This is taken from his *Declaration and Address,* the most famous document of our heritage, being an angry denunciation of division among Christians and a call for the unity of all God's people. Campbell wrote those words in 1809, two years before he started his first congregation known as a "Church of Christ." And yet he wrote of "the Church of Christ upon earth" as if it already existed. This shows that he had no such mentality that Christ's church did not even exist and that he was about to "restore" it according to some recognizable New Testament pattern.

Campbell believed that the church of Jesus Christ not only then existed but that "the gates of hades" had not prevailed against it since the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit breathed it into existence. It was nonetheless in need of renewal or reformation, and that was his mission, especially in terms of restoring love, unity, and fellowship to the church now tragically tom asunder by partyism.

In this insightful statement, capsuled in a single line, Thomas Campbell bequeaths to us the one important truth about the church that we must recapture in our time if we are to find our roots: *The Body of Christ upon earth has existed all through the centuries and it has always by its very nature been one.* Along with Campbell and the apostle Paul we must ask ourselves, "Is Christ divided?" We can't unite the Church of Jesus Christ. It is already one—essentially, intentionally, and constitutionally. This is because the church's unity is a gift of the Holy Spirit to be received.

The church's unity is real but not realized, something like a marriage in trouble. Schisms have imposed themselves upon that unity and obscured it. This is how Campbell viewed his mission, to discover principles of unity and fellowship whereby the church's essential oneness could be realized. It is noteworthy that the passage of Scripture he turned to again and again in his famous document was Ro. 15:7: "Receive one another, even as Christ has received you, to the glory of God."

That verse set the tone for much of what he had to say. Since we were not perfect when Christ received us, and we certainly were not right about everything, we should receive our sisters and brothers on the same basis. We do not have to see everything alike to be united, for oneness and sameness are not identical. And when we accept each other

on the grounds that Christ accepts us it will not be to our own glory, as is the case with partyism, but to the glory of God. We don't need to know much more about unity than that!

Under the engraved likeness of Barton Stone on that cenotaph is his pungent slogan "Let the unity of Christians be our polar star," which is a remarkable take of the Lord's prayer for unity in Jn. 17. Stone understood Jesus to say that only a united church could win a lost world, so unity is essential to the church's mission. The polar star (unity) guides the old ship (the church) on its mission (evangelization of the world). When we keep our eye on the polar star by being a loving and united people we will really be God's redeeming community in the world.

A heartfelt recovery of Stone's slogan with all its implication would turn the Churches of Christ in a different direction. Presently we have no conception of ourselves as a unity people. How can we be when we never associate with other churches in any kind of cooperative effort? We can't so much as join with other churches in an Easter or Thanksgiving program. We have been conned into believing that if we associate with other Christians and other churches that we thereby approve or endorse everything they believe and practice. But that is precisely the point of being united in Christ: We can be one without being the same; we can love and accept without approving and endorsing.

So, the cenotaph in Nashville witnesses to our heritage as a unity movement. *Let Christian unity be our polar star. The Church of Christ upon earth is one.* These are dynamic concepts. If we recover these slogans they will help us to think unity rather than division, and they will lead us to pray more for unity, something that we hardly ever do in our assemblies.

We will not have time for an extended visit in the library and archives. Enough to say that the building houses over 100,000 books, pamphlets, papers, letters about our history. They are about a unity movement that God called into existence in this country almost 200 year ago that we in Churches of Christ are supposed to be a part of. I could take you to numerous books and journals in that library that would confirm that fact. I will give but two examples. Dr. Robert Richardson, Alexander Campbell's longtime associate and personal physician, was, according to Campbell himself, the best interpreter of what the movement was all about. I could show you where he wrote in Campbell's paper, the *Millennial Harbinger,* that "This movement was born with a passion for unity, and unity has been its engrossing theme."

The other example would be William Robinson, a British leader of the movement, whose *What the Churches of Christ Stand For* is respected as one of the best statements of what we are supposed to be as a people. In that book, written in 1959, he lists the six

significant contributions to the church at large coming out of the Church of Christ heritage. After naming the place we have given to the Bible, the centrality of Christ, the divine nature of the church, baptism and weekly communion, and an aversion to man-made creeds, he lists "an undying passion it has witnessed to the unity of Christ's church." He says, like Richardson, that it started with a passion for Christian unity, and he added, speaking for the British Churches of Christ, "The passion for Christian unity has never been lost."

A passion for Christian unity! Is that where we are in Churches of Christ today? That is where we must come to if we are to be saved.—*the Editor*

Courage consists, not in blindly overlooking danger, but in seeing and conquering it. —*Jean Paul Richter*

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WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE IN OTHER CHURCHES?

Doug Hale

I have painfully learned that the greatest sin one can commit insofar as the Church of Christ is concerned is to believe that there are Christians in other denominations. Adultery can be forgiven, drunkenness tolerated, and pride scarcely noticed, but accepting Baptists, Presbyterians and Episcopalians as brethren is virtually unpardonable. This intolerance has raised a question in my mind. If these people are not Christians, just what are they?

They are not atheists because they believe in God and worship Him. They are not pagans because they reject idols and other false gods, and they try to serve the one, true, and living God. They are not unbelievers because they believe in Jesus as the Son of God. Their faith is demonstrated in many ways all over the world.

Certainly it is not a matter of them being too stupid to understand the Bible. These people have provided great biblical scholars, and many of us in the Church of Christ study their works. Such scholars as William Barclay, R.C.H. Lenski, G. Campbell Morgan, John Stott, and Francis Schaeffer have had a tremendous impact on our teaching and preaching.

It is not that they are dishonest. The sincerity of their faith is seen in their willingness to sacrifice everything for the cause of Christ. Who is more devoted than Mother Teresa? Some of the most devoted people I know come from what we call "the denominations."

So, if none of these designations fit, just who are these people in other churches? I would like to be so bold as to suggest that they are our brothers and sisters who are in error about some things.

The Calvinistic Baptist is my brother or sister—in error about some things.

The unimmersed Methodist is my brother or sister—in error about some things.

The tongue-speaking Pentecostal is my brother or sister—in error about some things.

The organ-playing Disciple of Christ is my brother or sister—in error about some things.

The popish Roman Catholic is my brother or sister—in error about some things.

And to be honest I must add: The legalistic member of the Church of Christ is my brother or sister—in error about some things.

We are all in error about some things! What is crucial is that we not be in error about Jesus Christ.

Anyone who claims to be without error claims to be perfect. Let us extend the same grace to others that we want them to extend to us.

This does not mean that I endorse or approve of the error that these people believe and practice. It does not mean that I approve of denominationalism. But it does mean that we have one significant thing in common—the *essential* thing—faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who died for our sins and was raised from the grave alive.

Having Jesus Christ as the Lord of our lives we can work together toward a more perfect unity in Him.

(This testimonial will impress you even more when you know that Doug Hale is esteemed by those who know him as one of the finest young preachers in the Church of Christ. He was fired from the congregation he served in Lubbock amidst a successful ministry when he treated a Methodist gentleman, who came with his member wife, as if he were a Christian. His dismissal upset and discouraged a growing church. He now works with a more open Church of Christ in Portales, N. M.—Editor)

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OUR CHANGING WORLD

I met recently with a men's Bible study made up of old-timers around Denton, a class that has been meeting for almost a half century, but not connected with any church. They presently meet in a funeral home. They meet early and swap old stories over coffee, then settle in for what is "church" to a number of them, while others hurry off to meet their wives and attend some church. A lady comes in just long enough to play the piano for a few songs, and then takes off. After prayer they study the Bible together in about as unsectarian a way as you can imagine. The day I was there an old acquaintance of mine, a lawyer in our city, read a paper written by a former judge of the Texas Supreme Court on the trial of Jesus from a jurist's point of view. It was so well done and so moving that I conned him out of a copy. The judge praised the Hebrew judicial system in the time of Jesus as eminently fair, and as even more exacting for justice than our modern systems. An example is that in the Great Sanhedrin, the Jewish supreme court where Jesus was "tried," a guilty sentence could not be passed on the same day of the trial, while an acquittal could be. He noted that almost all the safeguards for justice were ignored in the case of Jesus. Anything for a guilty verdict! Even by having the trial at night, which was one of the violations. I was not only impressed by the paper but also that a bunch of old cronies get together like that to study together. Maybe that is what the kingdom of God is like in our time. It is like old fuddy-duddies getting together in a funeral home to swap yarns and study the Bible together.

In early March I had to leave Ouida sick to be part of the 20th anniversary celebration of a merger of a Church of Christ and a Christian Church in Normal, Illinois. I was with both churches back in the days when they were talking and praying it out. In 1971 they effected a union and became one congregation on the basis of what they had in common. They have had two decades of both spiritual and numerical growth, with two Sunday morning services. I was pleased to be on the program with the highly-esteemed Bruce Parmenter. Ouida was worse when I returned, a respiratory infection that really laid her low, the sickest she has ever been, and for a time discouraged her and zapped me. Our niece, who is a nurse, helped with Mother Pitts, who, like a baby, has to have attention regardless. We eventually turned to a new doctor, an ear-nose-throat specialist as well as an allergist, to attend to Ouida, who put her own a powerful and expensive antibiotic. There is some suspicion that her problem was an allergy. We thank God that she is now almost back to normal.

The *Christian Standard,* a journal that circulates primarily among Christian Churches, is this year celebrating its 125th anniversary, which makes it the oldest continuously published journal in the Protestant world. When President Bush sent congratulations he expressed an awareness that one of his predecessors in the White House, James A. Garfield, was one of the founders of the paper. He also quoted from President Andrew

Jackson to the effect that the Bible is “the rock on which our Republic rests.” President Bush said Jackson said that because he knew that the Bible shaped our forebears’ concept of individual liberty and their vision of a free and just society. We join President Bush in congratulating the *Christian Standard*.

We sometimes hear that the Roman Catholic Church discourages the reading of the Bible. That would be news to Pope John Paul II who recently issued this statement from the Vatican: “The Church recommends the reading of the Word of God as a source of Christian prayer, and at the same time exhorts all to discover the deep meaning of Sacred Scripture through prayer “so that a dialogue takes place between God and man. For ‘we speak to him when we pray; we listen to him when we read the divine oracles.’”

There are encouraging signs that Churches of Christ have begun to take a critical look at the way they have been interpreting the Bible. Books published by the ACU Press have called for a closer look at the way we have treated the Bible, and a seminar is soon to be conducted at Harding Graduate School of Religion on biblical interpretation. Two representative men, Bill Swetmon of Dallas and Jimmy Jividen of Abilene, will present different views on the old Church of Christ dogma of “the authority of the silence of the Bible,” which is the mother of our factions and sub-factions. I know and respect both men. I hope that they will not only hang our dirty linen on the line, but do a little scrubbing while they are at it. I want the “traditional” view to be well presented so that it can die a noble death. This can be done with due respect for our well-meaning forebears who invented the dogma in an era of debates between brethren that should never have happened to start with.

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READER'S EXCHANGE

After being healed of the hurt of leaving the Church of Christ I can look back with appreciation for these things: a simple worship, a New Testament faith, and a continuous renewal of the church. My mentor from the pioneer days was Barton W. Stone more than Alexander Campbell. He was a humble man with a great heart for Jesus Christ.—*Gary Cummings, Bakersfield, Ca.*

Congregations should occupy the role that prophets did in the Old Testament in that they should warn God’s people of departures from the faith, and call them back to God. We will always need to remind each other of such issues as unity rather than division and

the priesthood of all believers rather than a clergy, but always in the proper spirit.—*Darrell Bolin, Lock Haven, Pa.*

Your series on what the Church of Christ must do to be saved may do more to heal division in our ranks than anything so far. I thank God for your keen mind and loving heart.—*Rod Cameron, Converse, In.*

May God's grace and peace abound in the hearts of world leaders on this, the eve of the war in the Persian Gulf. It is reassuring to know that He is in control regardless, and He holds us in His hand.—*Gary Taliaferro, Friendswood, Tx.*

I have re-read all my issues from 1971-1990. You will never know what your writings have meant to me. I am so thankful you were true to your convictions and that God gave you such an ability to express them. I feel like I know both you and Ouida.—*Joyce Briley, Casper, Wy.*

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BOOK NOTES

We regret to announce that *The Stone-Campbell Movement* by Leroy Garrett is now out of print. We continue to receive orders, but we have to return the checks, and that means the end of our bonus offer for the book. It has sold so well, something like 10,000 copies, that the publisher plans a revised edition, which means I have more work to do bringing it up to date. It will be out of print for awhile. We will keep you informed.

The good news is that we now have from the bindery the bound volume of this journal for 1989-90, under the title *The Hope of the Believer,* a 400-page book containing all the issues of this paper for 1989 and 1990, with a preface and table of contents. It is a handsome, hardbound library edition with dust jacket. It is $13.50 plus postage, but it is being mailed to all who ordered it at the pre-publication price of $12.50 plus postage. Even if you have loose copies laid back, you would be pleased to have this in your library.

That means we once again have six bound volumes available, from 1977-1990, except for 1979-80, and you get them all at the special price of $70.00 postpaid.

William Barclay's delightful little book, *A Spiritual Autobiography,* is going out of print, but we got a handful of the last ones and will send them out while they last at $2.50 postpaid. Another title by Barclay, *Jesus As They Saw Him,* a very informative book of

over 400 pages, is also going out of print. They sold for $12.95, but due to a special purchase we can sell them while they last at $7.95 postpaid.

We have a fresh stock of F. F. Bruce's great work on *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free*, which is a veritable gold mine of information, and it is easy to read for a scholarly work. For a 500-page book it is a bargain at $22.50 postpaid.

Subscription Rates: $6.00 one year or $8.00 for duration (Dec. 1992). In clubs of three or more (mailed by us) $4.00 per name per year. Foreign: $8.00 a year.

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